



**For immediate release**

Contact: Jay Peterson, Marketing Director  
[jpeterson@dcdc.org](mailto:jpeterson@dcdc.org)  
(937) 228-3232 ext. 113

**August 3, 2021**

# Dayton Contemporary Dance Company receives Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Transformational Change Grant

**DAYTON, OH**

Dayton Contemporary Dance Company announces receipt of a strategic, institutional change grant of \$771,000 over 3 years, from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as part of its Comprehensive Organizational Health Initiative (COHI), which aims to address funding inequity in the arts sector. COHI comes at a time when dance audiences are becoming both more diverse and economically important to the sector as a whole. Three years in the making, the grant comes at the perfect time.

COVID-19 shut down live performing arts for almost 18 months. As live performances are reemerging, the arts world finds itself forever changed, but the Mellon grant was in-process long before COVID-19 hit.

The International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD) has been working with the Mellon Foundation and COHI over many years. Their partnership helped to identify inequities in funding of minority arts organizations, and in particular, black dance companies. Through Mellon, IABD will be helping to assist grants for more than 60 black dance companies over the next few years. The first priority was to assist the five founding members of IABD, which includes Lula Washington Dance Theatre in California (\$970,000), Cleo Parker Robinson Dance in Colorado (\$850,000), Dallas Black Dance Theatre in Texas (\$824,000) Philadanco! The Philadelphia Dance Company in Pennsylvania (\$420,000) and Dayton Contemporary Dance Company.

Since 2018, Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF) has consistently worked with DCDC to gain a deep understanding of the company's financial position and its risks and opportunities as part of COHI. The aim of this ongoing partnership is the formulation of a robust business model to maintain and expand a strong capital structure with a steadily consistent cash flow. The grant will allow the company to expand upon its 53-year history of artistic and community engagement success. CEO Ro Nita Hawes-Saunders remarked, "The funding is allowing the company to implement a new business model, and to expand operations and resources to ensure DCDC's stability and longevity. The new model will deepen DCDC's impact on the world of contemporary dance and on the local community as well as other communities while the company tours. By expanding institutional capacity, the company extends the reach of its mission, continuing to contribute to the fine art of dance and employing dance to energize learning environments for people of all ages. We are grateful to IABD, NFF and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for this transformational gift and continued commitment to black dance."

**For the latest opportunities to engage with us, visit [www.dcdc.org](http://www.dcdc.org) and connect with us on social media: Facebook/Instagram: @daytoncontemporarydancecompany & Twitter: @DCDCLive.**

*Dayton Contemporary Dance Company (DCDC) was founded in 1968 to create performance opportunities for dancers of color. Fifty-three years later, it remains rooted in the African-American experience, committed to the development of diverse movement artists on the global stage. DCDC is known for its extraordinary artistic execution, dance precision, and storytelling through dance art of international standard. Having the world's largest repertoire of classic works by African-American choreographers, this Dayton, Ohio company continues to celebrate dance art around the world. Prior to COVID-19, DCDC performed in Shanghai China, Kazakhstan, the Bolshoi in Moscow Russia and the Bahamas. They were the 2016 NYC Bessie Award co-winner for Outstanding Revival for their work performed at Lincoln Center presented by Paul Taylor American Modern Dance. In 2018, they received the Irma Lazarus Award at the Ohio Governor's Awards for the Arts. Chief Artistic and Producing Director Debbie Blunden-Diggs continues the company's long legacy with groundbreaking dance works by top choreographers, including Donald Byrd, Ronen Koresch, and Kiesha Lalama. DCDC is under the leadership of Chief Executive Officer Ro Nita Hawes-Saunders.*

**DAYTON CONTEMPORARY DANCE COMPANY**